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2016 session
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Agenda item 5
High-level segment

Statement submitted by Palestinian Return Centre, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

16-08760 (E) 020616

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Statement

The Palestinian Return Centre has been dedicated for the past 20 years to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian refugees. We urge the international community not to forget the centrality of the refugee question that is key to bringing justice to the Palestinian people and is vital for achieving the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

We would like to draw your attention to the Palestinian refugee problem, which remains unresolved as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is still responsible for providing assistance and protection to over 5 million displaced Palestinians throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

In recent years, the vulnerability and isolation of Palestinian refugees has intensified, and broader gains in social and economic development across the region are very much at risk. In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals recently adopted by the international community were an aspiration beyond the foreseeable horizon of Palestinian refugees as long as they remained casualties of the unresolved conflict that had violated their fundamental human rights for more than six decades.

The 2015 Report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) confirmed that they contributed to reducing poverty, empowering women and girls and improving health and well-being. However, in many countries economic growth was not sufficiently inclusive or equitable to reach the poorest. Conflicts remain the biggest threat to human development, with fragile and conflict-affected countries typically experiencing the highest poverty rates and levels of extreme deprivation. This is the case for millions of Palestinians living in refugee camps who are suffering from extreme poverty, inadequate housing conditions and high food insecurity.

Therefore, the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries, should be strengthened. This first year of the agenda is pivotal for charting the path towards sustainable development for the next 15 years. The protracted condition that the majority of Palestinian refugees find themselves in is a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. This needs to be addressed in order for sustainable development to help these communities escape deprivation and poverty.

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Statement submitted by Training for Women Network, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Across regions and countries, evidence suggests that sustainable development strategies that do not promote gender equality and the full participation and empowerment of women and girls will not succeed. As gender equality, in addition to being a human right, is also catalytic to social, economic and environmental progress, it should be well integrated into sustainable development policies, strategies and action plans.

Gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development are intrinsically linked. These linkages cut across the social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainable development. Acknowledging how development challenges and responses affect women, as well as women's vital contributions to economic progress, is essential for the success of sustainable development and poverty eradication policies and practices. Initiatives that engage women as full stakeholders have proven to enhance sustainable livelihoods of local communities and national economies. The success of a post-2015 sustainable development framework depends on translating existing policy promises on gender equality and women's empowerment into concrete actions. Entrenching women's rights within the outcomes, commitments and governing frameworks for sustainable development will enhance human rights frameworks.

Women are key economic actors and agents of sustainable development and consumption. As primary caretakers of families, communities and natural resources, women have accumulated specific knowledge and skills about local conditions and ecological resources. Furthermore, research has shown that women are more inclined than men to choose sustainability as a lifestyle, engage in environmentally appropriate behaviour and make sustainable consumption choices. It is critical to ensure that women participate equally and meaningfully in decision-making and control of sustainable development efforts. Particular attention needs to be paid to the active participation and leadership of indigenous women, migrant and refugee women and women from minority groups. Obstacles that impede women's economic empowerment and participation should be addressed, including gender-based discrimination that impedes and undervalues women's contributions to sustainable development. Enhancing gender equality requires targeted approaches to changing attitudes, behaviours and structures and discriminatory social norms and customary, common and statutory laws. Investing in women and girls will not only enhance gender equality, but will also promote cleaner and more equitable development and drive progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the broader sustainable development goals.

Equating sustainable development solely with green growth overlooks the social aspects of development and reduces striving for sustainability to a purely technological exercise. Focusing on achieving a sustainable and equitable economy will promote human well-being in the short and long term. This requires a paradigm shift so that economic thinking is driven by equity.

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Statement submitted by Umuada Igbo Nigeria, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

16-08762 (E) 030616

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Statement

Implementing the post-2015 development agenda: moving from commitment to results

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Report by the Secretary-General are 17 goals. We shall discuss Achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls under 5.6A and 5.6C of the goals.

In commenting on 5.6A it is noted that the National Law in Nigeria is the 1999 Constitution but we have local laws/customary laws. The constitution frowns at discrimination in all its ramifications.

In Igbo land which is the South East of Nigeria, customary law prohibits a woman from inheriting the property of her husband or her father as that is exclusively for the male children. To side step this law one has to make a valid will. Umuada Igbo Nigeria has been fighting this discrimination and has held many workshops/lectures, the last of which was in Enugu in February 2014 during the United Nations Mother Tongue Day. Providentially, in April 2014 the Supreme Court in Mrs. Lois Ukeje and Anor v. Mrs. Ada Ukeje (2014) 4SC part 1 page 1, Onyibor Aniekwe v. Mrs. Maria Nweke (2014) 4SC Part III page 65 declared the customary law of disinheriting women null and void and in conflict with S.42 of the Constitution, which is the National Law. The Supreme Court after nullifying the customary law held that a widow shall inherit the property of her husband irrespective of having no male issues. The other case upheld the inheritance of the father's property by her daughter.

The reason Umuada Igbo Nigeria is fighting this customary law is to empower women, widows and the girl child to have access to land, the source of wealth.

Under 5.6C Umuada Igbo Nigeria is holding workshops/lectures in Igbo land ie. South East Nigeria educating girl child to choose marriage under the Marriage Act to avoid being disinherited by customary law on inheritance. We also advise our women to encourage their husbands to write wills so that their widows and children may have a better life because without a valid will, the relations of the man, at his demise, will take all the property of the deceased if he has no surviving male child. Umuada Igbo Nigeria has embarked on advocacy visits to the communities to enlighten women on the Supreme Court judgment. We also give free legal services to oppressed widows to fight for their rights. We now organize other NGOs to persuade the Houses of Assembly of the various states to have legislation in accord with the Supreme Court judgment.

Solutions

Many problems facing women in Igbo land i.e. South East can be addressed through "Radio Programmes". This is a Public Enlightenment Programme to educate and sensitize South East women to their rights of inheritance. Umuada Igbo Nigeria has started sensitizing women and girls to the Supreme Court judgment on inheritance Rights in Igbo Culture.

It will also ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.